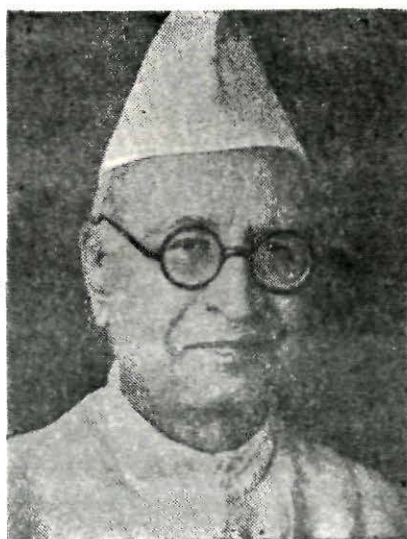


**SOME ILLUMINATING SAYINGS  
OF BAPA**



**HARIJAN - SEVAK - SANGH**



## **Some Illuminating Sayings of Bapa**

I was blessed with four great teachers in my life—my father, Shri Gondo Keshav Karve of Poona, Shri Shinde and Shri Gopal K. Devdhar. I dare not claim Mahatma Gandhi and Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale as my teachers as I do not consider myself worthy of being called their disciple. Except my father, the other three were not only my teachers but my elderly colleagues as well. My sense of indebtedness towards them is so deep that I can never forget it, especially the gratitude towards my father.

Besides these, the other factors that imbued into me the spirit of public service were the Christian-missions spread all over India. These missions inspired me a lot when I started taking active role in the service of the common man. We should not look down upon these missionaries nor treat them with disrespect. Let us study their system of working and learn some good lessons for ourselves. These Christian Missions aroused in me the spirit of serving the lepers and work for their welfare.

I have definitely come to believe that what India needs today is dedicated workers and not those who would only work at their convenience. And so long as we don't get dedicated and devoted workers there can be no progress. There can be no dearth of money whatsoever for the true workers.

Following are the essentials for public-life—freedom of public meetings and organisational independence, freedom of life and safety of belongings, freedom of speech and writing and freedom of Press. These are the fundamental rights of humanity. These are like the mother's milk for the baby.

More than any thing else, India today needs discipline and the spirit of service among the young—men and women alike. I feel distressed at the lack of these two noble qualities in our lives. However I am of the conviction that the great and difficult problems of the country will be solved only when the younger generation would dedicate itself in the service of the country, the poor and the distressed.

If the rains have to fulfill a job then I also have to achieve my task and when the rains do not tarry to accomplish it, then, how can I delay in the discharge of my duties? Let, therefore, the nature and man perform their assigned functions.

My devotion to duty, my faith in the ideal, and my strong determination keep me absorbed in my work and do not let me feel fatigued.

I go to bed at 9 P.M. and get up at 5 in the morning. I also take a little rest in the after-noon. Because of this regularity in my routine I am able to maintain good health. God has favoured me with a well-built body and I have been able to maintain it through regulated life and well balanced diet.

Truely speaking I have no business to live in a splendid city like Delhi, my real place is in the Jungles and the hutments of the poor. There lies ample work to be accomplished by me. You have praised me with high-sounding adjectives like "Vaishnav Jan" and "Yogiraj" in your songs. There is much of exaggeration which has been attributed to me. I neither claim to be a true "Vaishnav Jan" nor a "Yogiraj", I am an humble being alone.

Nobody not even the state has any right to force anybody to work against his or her conscience. If any officer forces some farmer who is ploughing his field to let loose the oxen to draw his (officer's) own cart, if the officer takes away the buffaloes of some one to satisfy his own needs, if some nurse is forced to give up her own baby in order to look after the baby of some big landlord then, these acts of forced labour are simply most inhuman and criminal and call for most severe punishment. The police should seriously intervene in such matters.

When the whole nation had stood up against the mighty British Empire through non-violent resistance, then, how could a common man, who had sincere sympathies with the national struggle for independence, escape from the clutches of injustice and if he falls a victim to it he should not complain against it. When a non-official inquiry committee was refused permission to inquire into acts of high-handedness of an ordinary police officer and anybody who cared to demand such an inquiry was thrown

Behind the prison bars, when in the very presence of the District Judge the National flags were burnt, when the supporters of the non-violent volunteers were considered to be the enemies of the King and the country and were put in the prisons, the very noble sons of the land were declared as undesirable foreign persons and were exiled from the country, then, under these unfortunate circumstances, it was foolish on my part to expect fair play from the Government. It mattered little whether I was doing all this work as a social worker and not as an agitator, even then to expect justice from the State Courts was futile. But, I hope to get full justice at the hands of the Supreme Judge, the God Himself, who would deliver justice equally to all of us.

As for a country and a good Government, the need of maintaining armies, postal services, network of railway and irrigation canals is most basic so is the need for national education. The primary education through out the whole country is the fundamental need and most essential.

Until such time our country remains mainly agricultural and our people have to depend on it, it is essential to provide them with some additional occupation yielding good earnings to supplement their living. Next to food clothing is the second-most basic need of the human-beings and 'CHARKHA' is the only suitable answer to this problem and is the most desirable home industry

for this country. Therefore, the renovation of the 'CHARKHA' industry is not a temporary solution for uplifting the Indian village but, it is rather a part and parcel of the Indian village life itself. This should be our basic approach towards 'CHARKHA'. The real India exists and grows in villages and not in big cities.

The selfish people who are bent upon earning black money through any means and through which they hope to procure themselves all comforts would certainly not be able to enjoy their bad earnings. The unwholesome lust for money would ultimately doom the country and themselves.

Beloved Bapu, left us after having fulfilled his mission. But our task remains half-done. The message of Truth, Non-violence and Service of the Poor and the Harijans which he had given us, have got to be fully accomplished by us. That is our sacred duty.

We are a bit awakened now. Gandhiji's Epic Fast has shed our ignorance and darkness. How can we serve the Harijans during such a period of crisis? This should be our main concern. Let us hope that all this would not remain a piece of exhibition alone and with the ending of the fast our spirit to serve the down-trodden Harijans would not fade away. If we, the oppressors, want to get relieved from the agony of horrible curse of the poor and the oppressed, we should awaken ourselves right now and rise

to the occasion to really serve Harijans.

We have to remember that the pledge that Gandhiji had given on his behalf and on behalf of the Hindu Society to put an end to untouchability has till now not been fully implemented. So far as the issue of educating Harijans is concerned, it can be said that satisfactory progress has been made in this direction. But, we have not yet succeeded in really owning our Harijan brothers and sisters as our own kith & kin. In villages where 80% of the Indian people live, the stigma of untouchability is still prevalent with all its intensity. Though from the legal point of view Harijans have been conceded the rights of drawing water from all public wells and ponds etc., yet in practical life they face and under-go very many difficult situations for availing themselves of these opportunities. Therefore, the Hindu society in general and Harijan Sevak Sangh in particular have to own the responsibility of getting these rights to Harijans free from any reservations whatsoever. We shall have to shift our field of work from cities to villages because it is in the villages where Harijans encounter greater difficulties. I have full faith that Harijan Sevak Sangh will formulate practical steps in this direction.

I have visited about 72 villages and 118 Harijan localities during this tour. In addition to this many Harijans of their own, from some 50 villages, have narrated their difficulties to me. Wherever I sat down to listen to the various problems faced by



the Harijans and tried for myself to take a stock of the seriousness of the situation, I felt deeply pained to learn from them that they are compelled to steal drinking water for their living. In this process whenever their house wives are caught, they are badly stoned and their pitchers broken. So, they have to depend upon the water of those ponds where the village ladies wash their dirty clothes. At times they have to drink the infected water from the dirty ponds meant for cattle only. In order to get water even from these dirty ponds they are, at places, compelled to pay one rupee every year to the person concerned. I, as a Hindu feel very much ashamed to listen to these heart rending and agonising tales of the oppressed Harijans.

When the people are so cruel as to deny God given gift of natural water to the poor Harijans, then in such a situation the only alternative left is to provide them separate wells. But these things cannot be allowed to go on for long. The Harijan Sevak Sangh will have to fulfill its obligations to better the lot of Harijans until such time Hindus and the High Caste develop in themselves sincere human consciousness leading to a real change of heart.

So long as our educated class does not completely identify itself with the lot of Harijans, by living among their colonies, serving them all the time and share with them their joys and sorrows it is

not possible to deliver them from their agonising plight.

‘Bhangis’ are a thousand times better than the thieves, the robbers and the murderers. It is our sacred duty to uplift their living conditions. But we have not paid any attention in this direction. We have not cared to think even a little regarding this black-chapter of our social injustice.

The people in the cities construct latrines without caring an iota for the convenience of the sweepers. We may spoil latrines in any way, may not even keep receptacles, may also not provide washing facilities yet the sweeper has to clean it.

The sweeper is performing the duties of our mothers. As the mother cleanses the night-soil of her children so also the sweeper cleanses the night-soil of the whole society. Therefore, we should respect the sweeper as we respect our mothers and should feel indebted to him.

Our ‘Sadhus’ and saints have served the most lowly and down-trodden, and have gone even to the places of thieves and robbers to serve them.

The story of the Adivasis is altogether different. We seldom think of their existence. They never get any chance to visit big cities and they happen to come to villages very occasionally. We call them ‘Blackies’ out of disrespect. The people of cities,

the privileged class of the intellectuals and the holy teachers hardly come in their contact. Adivasis lead a lonely life, secluded from us, in a narrow world of their own. But we, out of our false vanity of high birth, caste and family, do not care even to think of them. Our rulers, who ever they are, be they Hindus, Muslims or Britishers, have long been neglecting these poor and helpless natives. The result is so evident that even in this age of progress and prosperity they are living a very very primitive way, to some how keep themselves alive and are desperately fighting a losing battle against disease and inhuman exploitation.

Generally the Bhils are law abiding people unless they are compelled to take drastic action, even killing, is resorted to because of being deprived of bare food either by the Nature or the society. It is the duty of the State to save them from starvation and thus keeping them away from being turned into plunderers and murderers. Let us see we do not suppress them to an extent so as to compel them to rise in revolt and create chaos. Instead, we should co-operate with them and help them to earn and enjoy their hard earned bread.

The non-Adivasis and the social workers should own the responsibility of serving the natives without entertaining any selfish motives until the natives themselves are able to stand on their own legs. They should help them to better their conditions in economic and educational spheres.

There has been a great change in the living conditions of the Bhils in the last 25 years. They have progressed and grown wiser. The light of knowledge has also dawned upon them. Let us work hard to better their lot. The coming ten years is a very delicate period. We have to prove our worth and within this period we have to uplift the status of the Harijans and the Bhils at par with the rest of the countrymen. We should pledge ourselves to it and do our level best to improve the plight of our down-trodden brethren.

It is the duty of the State to establish primary schools in each and every village but the irony of fate is that instead of this, the Government have opened wine shops to keep the ignorant even more ignorant, let their lithargic and evil habits increase and keep the wretched folk lost in false sense of unreal pleasure.

I have, now, grown old. Before I die, I very much long to see for myself that the welfare movement for the natives has taken roots in all regions.

